



# CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

April 30, 2009

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# Constitution and By-Laws New Hope, a Biblical Community

Adopted February, 2009

## CONSTITUTION

### PREAMBLE

The Bible, not this constitution, is our final authority for matters of faith and practice. Furthermore, we affirm that only by the indwelling Holy Spirit, not this constitution, can we fulfill the will of God for New Hope. With this in mind, the purpose of this constitution is merely to provide a framework to facilitate the ministry of this Church; for the Bible teaches us to do all things "in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40). To this end, we the membership of New Hope, agree to be governed by this document, the by-laws and the accompanying policies.

### ARTICLE I: STATEMENT OF FAITH

**We believe** that the Bible (the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments) is God's infallible written Word. It stands as the sole basis of our beliefs. We believe that it was uniquely, verbally, and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit and that it was written without error (inerrant) in the original manuscripts. It is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

**We believe** there is one true God, eternally existing in three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - each of whom possesses equally all the attributes of Deity (Luke 3:22; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

**We believe** that Jesus Christ was, and remains, both fully God and fully man (John 1:14; Col 2:9-10; Acts 1:11). He eternally existed as God (John 14:9; Phil 2:6), then He was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18-23) and lived a sinless life (Heb. 4:15); He was crucified, died as a penalty for our sins (Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18), and was raised from the dead bodily on the third day (Luke 24:36-43; 1 Cor. 15:3-8). Later, He ascended to the Father's right hand where He is the head of the church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22) and intercedes for believers (Heb. 7:25). We believe Jesus Christ is personally, bodily, and visibly coming to earth again (Acts 1:11; 1 Thes 4:16).

**We believe** in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit. He indwells and gives spiritual life to each believer (1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:9), thus enabling them to live a Godly life (Eph. 3:16; Acts 1:8; Gal. 5:16, 22-23). He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. He intercedes for believers (Rom. 8:26) and He glorifies Christ (John 16:7-15).

**We believe** that man was created by God without sin (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7) and that by one man's disobedience to God (Gen. 3:1-24), every person incurred spiritual death (Rom. 5:12), which is separation from God, and physical death as a consequence; and that all people are sinners by nature and practice (Rom. 3:23). As a result, every man is in need of salvation from God (1 John 5:11-12).

**We believe** that salvation is a work of God's free grace and is not the result of human works, baptism, church membership or man's effort (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7). Only those who put their faith in Christ for the payment of their sins are forgiven and therefore in right relationship with God (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-2, 9).

**We believe** that at physical death, those who are in right relationship with God enter immediately into eternal, conscious fellowship with the Lord (Luke 16:19-31). Because of this, we have the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7). At physical death those who have rejected God's forgiveness in His Son enter immediately into eternal, conscious separation from God and face everlasting judgment and condemnation (Rev. 20:11-15). We also believe in the personal, visible, and imminent return of Christ to the earth to carry out the plan of God (Acts 1:11; 1 Thes. 4:16; Rev. 19:11-20:6).

**We believe** in the one true Church (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-32), composed of all who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13). God commands His people to make disciples of all the nations (Matt. 28:18-20), and also to assemble together regularly for worship, for edification, and for mutual encouragement (Heb. 10:24-25; Col. 3:16).

**We believe** that it is the responsibility of every Christian to be transformed into the image of Christ (Romans 12:2). We believe that this is accomplished in part by submitting to the lordship of Christ (Eph 1:22; Col. 1:17-18), yielding to the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18; Rom 8:12-13), and studying and obeying the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15; John 14:21).

## **ARTICLE II: THE CORPORATION**

### Section 1: Name

The name of this church shall be "New Hope, a *Biblical Community*."

### Section 2: Purpose

The purpose of this church is to glorify God by producing maturing followers (disciples) of Jesus Christ through the four scriptural principles of Learning, Loving, Worship and Prayer.

## **ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP**

Any person may become a member of New Hope if they have: received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their life, demonstrated in their manner of life the presence of Christ, demonstrated their obedience to Christ in baptism, agree with the Statement of Faith and agree to be governed by the constitution and by-laws of this church.

## **ARTICLE IV: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

This church shall operate according to an Elder led form of government as specified in the By-Laws. Qualified men shall be appointed to serve as Elders from the membership.

## **ARTICLE V: CHURCH LEADERS**

The spiritual leadership and general oversight of this church is the responsibility of the Elders.

The administrative leadership is vested in a body known as the Strategic Council.

For the purposes of incorporation in the state of Michigan the following people are considered the legal officers of the church:

The Board of Directors is comprised of The Elders and The Chairman of the Strategic Council  
 President - The Chairman of the Elders  
 Treasurer - The Chairman of Strategic Council  
 Secretary – An appointed Elder

## **ARTICLE VI: PROPERTY**

### Section 1: Acquisition and Disposition

The acquisition, disposition or mortgaging of real estate shall require the approval of the Elders and the Strategic Council.

### Section 2: Church Dissolution

Should conditions arise when, for any reason, the work of the church cannot continue at New Hope, the church property shall be disposed of in a manner consistent with applicable state law and subject to approval of a majority of voting church members. Any transfer of assets shall only be to a Christian organization as determined by the elders and approved by a majority of the membership.

**ARTICLE VII: AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to this constitution may be introduced; conditional upon a written approval from at least two (2) active members of the Elders and a detailed written presentation of the amendment submitted to the Elders at least one month prior to a regularly scheduled meeting of the Elders. Suggested amendments will be reviewed with the Strategic Council and all active Elders. Request for said changes shall not be acted upon until a subsequent business meeting, at which time an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the church membership present shall be required for acceptance. All proposed amendments must be prominently posted 60 days prior to the vote of the membership.

## BY-LAWS

### ARTICLE I: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

#### Section 1: Meaning of Membership at New Hope

Becoming a member of New Hope is an expression of the fact that we *have identified ourselves with Christ*, in the same way that Jesus' disciples were identified with Him during his ministry, or in the way that early New Testament Christians joined their lives together in a way that distinguished them in the communities of their day. Membership at New Hope is not about rights and privileges, nor does it confer any automatic favor from God or guarantee eternal life with Him. Rather, membership *publicly affirms that we intend to follow Christ together in a way that brings every aspect of our individual lives into alignment with His unique purposes for us.*

Membership at New Hope is not a requirement for worshipping or serving in the church, but it is an affirmation of our unity of belief and purpose, as well as a commitment to develop and use our unique gifts in this community of believers as we learn to love, serve and encourage each other. Members of New Hope are committed to four foundational values: Learning, Loving, Worship and Prayer. Learning speaks to our desire to know our God more fully and to obey Him more completely. Loving represents the mutual care and concern we express toward each other. Worship is not only what happens on Sunday morning, but the whole direction of our life with God. Finally, Prayer is the way that we communicate with God and unleash His power to transform our lives and advance His Kingdom on earth. The following commitments are criteria for membership at New Hope:

- Understand and accept the sacrifice Christ made to bring us into a right relationship with the God who loves us
- Affirm a common understanding of the basic Biblical principles of the Christian faith, as articulated in the New Hope Statement of Faith
- Commit to conduct one's life as a follower of Christ in a way that honors Him in everything that we do and contributes to a spirit of unity and love at New Hope
- Obedience to Christ demonstrated in Baptism

#### Section 2: Becoming a Member

The process of becoming a member at New Hope begins with being a part of our next "Discovery" class. The purpose of this class is to give all potential members an understanding of what we as a church believe, the purposes of New Hope, the responsibilities of members, and the opportunity to explore the various ways you can serve within the church.

The next step is filling out a short membership questionnaire, followed by an arranged time for you to meet with an elder, and/or another New Hope member. This meeting is an opportunity to get to know you better and to hear about how you became a follower of Jesus. It is also an opportunity for us to answer any questions you have about the church, and to clearly explain membership.

#### Section 3: Responsibilities of Membership

- Cultivate a vital, growing relationship with God. A distinguishing characteristic of the people who are following Christ is their strong desire to know Him more fully and to reflect His image and character in every aspect of their lives.
- Help to build up the "Body of Christ." The Bible compares the church to a human body, with each part having its own uniquely important function. Likewise, for a local church to be healthy, it is vital that individuals discover and actively exercise their unique gifts and abilities for the benefit of other believers.
- Relate to each other and those outside the church as servants of Christ. Our relationships should reflect the character of Christ in love, humility and a desire to put the interest of others ahead of our own. Members must avoid lifestyles, attitudes and actions which would bring reproach on the name of Christ and His church.

#### Section 4: Removal from Membership

Any person may be removed from membership or transfer their membership to another church at their own request. A person may also be removed from membership if, in the collective judgment of the Elders, they demonstrate a continuing pattern of behavior characterized by public sin, lack of repentance and an unwillingness to respond to the counsel of the Elders. Prior to any removal from membership, the Elders will follow scriptural principles in an attempt to bring the errant member into repentance and restore them to full fellowship with God and participation in the life of New Hope.

#### Section 5: Voting

One of the privileges of membership is occasional voting on important issues which the Elders choose to bring before the membership.

### **ARTICLE II: CHURCH LEADERS**

#### Section 1: The Elders

What Elders are: Elders lead the church, teach and preach the Word, protect the church from false teachers, exhort and admonish in sound doctrine, visit and pray for the sick. In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church.

What Elders are not: They are not primarily policymakers, financial officers, fund raisers or administrators.

Composition: The Elders shall consist of the Senior Pastor and qualified men selected from among the congregation.

Selection process: The responsibility for the selection process will be vested with the Elders. The selection of new Elders by existing Elders will be accomplished in 4 phases-

Phase I – Prior to any appointment, an evaluation of the prospective elder will be conducted by existing Elders in order to ensure that his character and qualifications are consistent with those described in Scripture.

Phase II - During meetings with prospective elder the following areas of inquiry will be addressed:

- Doctrinal beliefs
- Personal giftedness
- Spiritual gifts (each prospective elder will fill out a spiritual gifts assessment)
- Ministry Interest
- Family Unity
- Moral Integrity
- Commitment of time
- Knowledge and ability to exhort

Phase III – A presentation of names of the selected men will be made to the congregation prior to the presentation of any elder. Two weeks prior to the installation of an elder the congregation of New Hope will be notified through mail and bulletin announcements of the selected individuals.

Phase IV – The selected men will appear before the congregation to be formally installed into the office of an elder. The process by which this will be done is in keeping with the model found in I Timothy 5 by which the existing Elders will lay hands on the newly appointed Elder and pray for him. In this manner the man will be recognized as an Elder and his ministry as such will begin.

Elder Qualifications: An Elder shall be a man who meets the qualifications as listed in I Timothy 3: 1-7, Titus 1: 5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. He will be a member of New Hope Church.

Duties:

Broad overview of responsibilities

- Pray
- Lead
- Exhort
- Admonish
- Encourage
- Teach
- Discipline
- Reproduce
- Protect
- Disciple
- Steward
- Shepherd
- Reprove

Specific overview of responsibilities

- Provide counsel & vision to the future direction of the church
- Visit the sick, the widow, the orphan
- Administer the Lord's Supper & Baptism
- Protect the flock from false teaching
- Manage, Lead and Encourage the congregation
- Participate in Elder meetings
- Regularly participate in the church services
- Teach/address theological questions
- Equip the congregation to do the work of ministry
- Provide the Senior Pastor with periodic evaluations

Decision Making: When the Elders meet for the purpose of decision making, unanimity shall be the primary goal. Decisions shall require the approval of the majority of the Elders



## Section 2: Church Staff

### The Senior Pastor

#### A. Qualifications

The Senior Pastor must be a man who meets the qualifications of an Elder. He shall exhibit the gifts of a pastor/teacher, be willing to advance the purposes of this church and adhere with conviction to the doctrinal position stated in this constitution.

#### B. Responsibilities

The Senior Pastor is a voting elder of the church and he shall help lead the church in the fulfillment of its stated purposes. He shall teach the Word of God and equip the congregation for the work of ministry.

#### C. Selection

##### 1. Search Committee

Senior Pastor – The Elders shall function as the Search Committee. They may appoint others to assist them in this task.

##### 2. Senior Pastorate candidacy

Having prayerfully considered each candidate as to his spiritual qualifications, personal character, education, ministerial record, and giftedness, the Search Committee shall bring a unanimous recommendation to the congregation.

##### 3. Vote

A Senior Pastor candidate shall be voted on at a regular or special business meeting. Notice of such meeting shall be mailed to the church membership at least ten days prior to the vote, and it shall be announced during the two weeks preceding such meeting. An affirmative vote of 75% of all ballots cast is required to extend a call.

#### D. Compensation

The salary and benefits of the Senior Pastor shall be prepared and approved by at least three members of the Elders or Strategic Council. The compensation package shall be reviewed annually (*before the beginning of the new fiscal year in September*) by the Chairman of the Strategic Council and the Chairman of the Elders.

#### E. Termination

The pastoral relationship may be dissolved by the pastor's resignation, or by Elder action at a special congregational business meeting called for that purpose. A congregational vote shall be considered a vote of confidence. A two-thirds majority must vote in support of the Pastor for the relationship to continue. The Senior Pastor shall give at least one month notice of his resignation and the church shall be required to do the same. A different period of notice may be arranged by mutual agreement. If he is found guilty of inappropriate behavior, he may be dismissed immediately by action of the church with one month's salary and be relieved of all pulpit, pastoral and administrative duties.

### Associate Staff

The Senior Pastor is responsible for hiring of associate and administrative staff. Associate staff members shall possess spiritual qualities appropriate to the position for which they are called and shall likewise be willing to support the purpose statement of this church and adhere to the doctrinal position stated in this constitution. Prior to the selecting of an associate staff member the Strategic Council shall develop a job description appropriate to the needs of the church. This shall serve as a guide to secure the best candidate for the position. The Senior Pastor will provide the associate staff with a written performance evaluation annually.

### Section 3: The Strategic Council

#### A. Purpose

To assist in development and implementation of strategies for fulfilling the vision and purpose of the church as set forth by the Elders.

#### B. Composition

The Strategic Council shall consist of the Senior Pastor, the Finance Director, and qualified individuals from the congregation and/or senior staff team. Each member of the Strategic Council will be selected by the Senior Pastor and agreed upon by the Elders. The Chairman of the Strategic Council will be selected from among the members of the Strategic Council by the Elders.

#### C. Responsibilities

The Strategic Council shall:

- Provide policy level oversight of church finances in collaboration with the church Treasurer and Finance Director.
- Review and establish church administrative policies and procedures as delegated by the Elders.
- Provide management and oversight for facility and grounds maintenance and improvement projects.
- Recommend to the Elders the annual budget for the Church.
- Develop and implement policies for church financial management.
- Carry out additional responsibilities as assigned by the Board of Elders.

#### D. Decision Making

Decisions shall require the approval of a majority of Council members.

### Section 4: The Treasurer

The chairperson of the Strategic Council shall also have the role and duties of the Church Treasurer. The Treasurer will provide policy level oversight of church finances, act as a liaison between the Strategic Council, the Elder Board and the Finance Director and shall report to the congregation annually on the financial state of the church.

### Section 5: Deacons

The purpose of the Deacons is to assist the Elders by serving those in need. Among the Deacons' responsibilities are the administration of the benevolence fund, the assessment of individual needs, and direction of the Compassionate Care Team. The Deacons will be appointed by the Elders, and shall meet the Biblical qualifications for Deacons.

## **ARTICLE III: MEETINGS**

### Section 1: Regular Services

- A. Corporate worship shall be held at least weekly. Meeting times for services shall be decided upon by the Elders and staff.
- B. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least monthly.

### Section 2: Business Meetings

- A. The fiscal year shall be from September 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>.
- B. The Annual Business meeting of the church shall be held in the evening of the first Sunday in October. This meeting shall be for the purpose of receiving ministry and financial reports. The annual budget will be presented at this meeting as well as a review of the previous fiscal year.

- C. Occasional "Special" business meetings may be called by the Elders & the Strategic Council. Written notice of such special business meetings shall be printed in the church bulletin and announced in two consecutive Sunday morning worship services prior to the meeting. The notice shall state the time and the purpose of the meeting. Only the items mentioned in the notice shall be acted upon at the special business meeting.

### Section 3: Voting Privileges

- A. Members must be at least 18 years of age in order to vote.
- B. A vote shall be taken on matters pertaining to selection of a Senior Pastor, facility expansion or indebtedness and amendments to the Constitution. The Chairman of the Strategic Council shall select individuals to serve as tellers for counting of the votes.
- C. Absentee ballots shall be submitted to the Chairman of the Strategic Council with the voting member's signature attached.
- E. Final vote tallies for decisions voted on by the congregation shall be reported to the membership no later than the Sunday following the date of the vote.

### Section 4: Quorum

A quorum for any business meeting shall be 20% of all those who are voting members at the time of the meeting.

## **ARTICLE IV: CHURCH AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS**

Any group seeking to organize in the name of New Hope shall first submit their plans to the Elders and Strategic Council for approval.

## **ARTICLE V: INDEMNIFICATION**

The Church shall indemnify any person who is or was an employee, representative, or agent of the Church against any liability asserted against such person and incurred in the course and scope of his or her duties or functions within the Church to the maximum extent allowable by law, provided the person acted in good faith and did not engage in an act or omission that is intentional, willfully or wantonly negligent, or done with conscious indifference or reckless disregard for the safety of others. The provisions of this article shall not be deemed exclusive of any other rights to which such person may be entitled under any bylaw, agreement, insurance policy, or otherwise.

## **ARTICLE VI: AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to these By-Laws must be approved by the Elders